

Questions and Answers from the Certification Review Board Panel Discussion

OECEM Annual Project Management Workshop, March 16, 2011

Question: *Does the Certification Review Board (CRB or the Board) consider past performance when determining whether to grant or deny Federal Project Director (FPD) certification?*

Answer: The Board does consider past performance. An FPD's performance on his/her projects is one indicator of his/her ability to successfully manage future projects, especially at Levels 3 and 4 which tend to be more complicated and have a higher level of risk.

Question: *If I take over a failing project, does that automatically mean that my performance will be judged as inadequate?*

Answer: The Board is interested in a candidate's performance to determine if he/she made a positive impact on the project as well as lessons learned. Often, some of the best candidates are FPDs that took over a troubled project and made it better. Be sure in your certification package to discuss what you did on a project and how the challenges you faced made you a stronger FPD.

Question: *Why is there so much emphasis on having FPDs with the appropriate level of certification assigned to projects? Why are these metrics tracked?*

Answer: The Department is focused on project management success. DOE has been rightly criticized for not having FPDs assigned to projects at the correct certification level. By maintaining a high number of projects with an FPD certified at the correct level, the Department demonstrates accountability and compliance with its own policy directing FPDs be certified at a level commensurate with the project.

Question: *Does the Board give credit for project management experience on work accomplished prior to the issuance of DOE O 413.3?*

Answer: Yes—the Board will credit documented experience accomplished prior to DOE O 413.3 as long as the work is comparable. Candidates must draw parallels with the Critical Decision process, demonstrate experience managing capital asset projects, and discuss how their roles and responsibilities are similar to those of an FPD as defined by DOE Order 413.

Question: *Does the Board give credit for Deputy FPD experience?*

Answer: Yes—see page 6-3 of the PMCDP's Certification and Equivalency Guidelines (CEG) for more information.

Question: *Why does the Board check references for Level 3 and 4 candidates?*

Answer: Reference checks generate important feedback to the Board on the FPD candidate's experience and leadership ability from individuals who have first-hand knowledge of the candidate.

Questions and Answers from the Certification Review Board Panel Discussion

OECD Annual Project Management Workshop, March 16, 2011

Question: *Who reviews the certification packages before they are presented to the Board?*

Answer: Certification packages are reviewed by independent reviewers who have extensive project management experience and are knowledgeable in FPD certification requirements. Prior to independent review, candidate packages are reviewed by the sponsoring Program Office.

Question: *What do Program Points of Contact do as part of the certification process?*

Answer: The Program Point of Contact is responsible for presenting qualified candidates to the Board and supporting candidates throughout the certification process.

Question: *Does the PMCDP expect any certification or curriculum requirement changes in the near future?*

Answer: The PMCDP does not envision any major changes in the next year or so.

Question: *Why can't PMCDP freeze certification requirements for candidates already in the program similar to a college that establishes hard class requirements and does not change the requirement midstream?*

Answer: The goal of PMCDP is to develop qualified and capable Federal Project Directors. Therefore, PMCDP curriculum evolves as the Department finds weaknesses and gaps in its execution of projects. Sometimes this results in new classes or other requirements being added to the PMCDP. While new requirements are normally not retroactive, they do affect candidates pursuing new or higher certification levels. Major changes to the PMCDP are approved by the Certification Review Board.

Question: *Why doesn't operations experience count towards the experience requirements for certification?*

Answer: Operations are not capital asset projects with a defined scope, schedule and cost nor are they subject to DOE Order 413.

Question: *Is there any way to speed up the certification process?*

Answer: When preparing their packages, candidate should work with their designated PMCDP Program POC and use the CEG to craft short, accurate responses.

Question: *Does the CRB accept position descriptions as evidence of prior work experience?*

Answer: Position descriptions do not always indicate the FPD's project management duties and responsibilities; therefore, the CRB does not accept them as evidence of work experience. Project documentation, such as the Project Execution Plan or Charter, is accepted.

Questions and Answers from the Certification Review Board Panel Discussion

OECEM Annual Project Management Workshop, March 16, 2011

Question: *Are there other ways FPDs can earn 80 continuing education (CE) units biennially besides training?*

Answer: FPDs may earn CEUs through other project management activities as identified in the Continuing Education Credit Assignment Table located in section 7 of the CEG and on the PMCDP website: http://management.energy.gov/documents/Continuing_Education_Credit_Assignment_Table.pdf

Question: *Can training from other agencies be used to satisfy certification competencies?*

Answer: Training from non-DOE sources can be accepted. For each applicable competency, the candidate must demonstrate that the alternative course covers a majority of the topics taught in the PMCDP course. For DOE-specific courses that have no training equivalents, such as *Project Management Systems and Practices in DOE*, candidates may use experience in lieu of training.

Question: *I am a headquarters employee who wants an FPD Certification. Why aren't there more PMCDP course deliveries offered in D.C. and Germantown?*

Answer: PMCDP is responsible for certifying capital asset project managers, almost all of whom are located in the field. As a result, getting classes to the field is the highest priority for PMCDP. Annually, PMCDP offers some deliveries at the D.C. and Germantown locations to accommodate headquarters personnel who wish to pursue certification, and to encourage FPDs in the field to visit headquarters.